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Proposal for a hearing on East Timor

In the last fourteen months the European Parliament has adopted, with substantial majorities, three strong resolutions on East Timor. In particular the resolution of September 1988, embodied in the Van den Heuvel Report (Doc. A 2-143/88), gives several considerations, proposals and demands, which so far, have not yet been followed through properly.

The September 1988 Resolution:

> calls on the Indonesian Government to permit free movement within East Timor and to grant people the right to enter and leave the area;
>
> calls on all governments in the Community to halt the sale of military equipment to Indonesia until the illegal occupation of East Timor is brought to an end;
>
> requests the Council to take measures aimed at reaching an agreement of cease-fire and enabling a referendum to be held after a transitional period, to be defined by the interested parties, with the people being allowed freedom of choice on the future of East Timor;
>
> urges the Commission, in cooperation with the Portuguese authorities and international competent aid organisations, to grant adequate and direct aid both in East Timor and in the refugee camps in Portugal and Australia;
>
> requests the Commission to give a progress report within six months.

These demands and requests (and many other proposals) should be picked up again and raised in the European Parliament, all the EEC institutions and the national parliaments of the twelve EEC countries.

A logical way to start this campaign is to hold a hearing on East Timor in the European Parliament.

<u>Proposals for a hearing</u>

> The Political Committee of the European Parliament (the most important committee) should function as host, possible together with PET (Parliamentarians for East Timor), while the organising should be handled by the European East Timor solidarity groups. In case the Political Committee cannot (for formal reasons) host the hearing, the hearing should still be held within the European Parliament, and hosted by one or preferably several fractions (Socialist, Rainbow, Green etc). Previous experience (the Malaysia-Singapore hearing) indicates that an event of this nature can have an important political

impact.

Preliminary talks in Strasbourg about the above possibilities will be held in January by members of the Dutch Indonesia Committee and the X minus Y Movement, both part of the East Timor solidarity movement in Holland. By the end of January we hope to have some idea about the hearing.

Hopefully at around the same time, the European East Timor solidarity groups will hold their annual conference; the organisation and preparation of the hearing will be an important item on the agenda.

Suggestions about the contents of the hearing

Day One Human Rights situation

In the morning session, East Timorese refugees will give testimonies about the human rights of the East Timorese both in East Timor and as refugees in Portugal. At least two Timorese should testify, the first a relatively new arrival who can describe the human rights conditions under Indonesian rule and an 'oldtimer' who can tell about his/her experiences, hardship, adjustment etc in Portugal. If necessary, experts or eyewitnesses on both matters (recent visitors, journalists or MPs, to East Timor and Portugese individuals or representatives from funding agencies or church organisations who have supported the work within the refugee community) can be heard also.

In the afternoon session representations will be made by organisations which, in the course of their work, have dealt with human rights violations in East Timor. Amnesty International or representatives of the East Timor solidarity groups will confirm or expand on the testimonies given in the morning session. Likewise the Portugese authorities which have dealt with Timorese refugees in their line of work, will elaborate on the conditions of the refugees and the difficulties they face living in Portugal.

The day will end with a discussion, with the participation of MEPs, to work out concrete demands and suggestion to improve the human rights situation in East Timor and to find solutions to improve the living conditions of East Timorese refugees in Portugal. Some suggestions: the admission of human rights organisations to East Timor to monitor the conditions there, a discussion on whether bilateral aid to East Timor through the Indonesian Government should be welcomed or criticised. The East Timor refugee problem is not only a Portugese problem, but a European problem.

Day two The right to selfdetermination

The morning session will start with statements of representatives from the East Timorese National Convergence. The audience can expect explanations about the new Peace Plan, recently launched from within East Timor by Xanana Gusmao, the leader of the National Resistance. The Peace Plan suggests concrete steps in the political and diplomatic field to pave the way to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of the people and for the exercise of the right of self-determination.

The afternoon session will be a plenary discussion on ways to implement the steps proposed in the Peace Plan. How the efforts of the UN

Secretary General to find a comprehensive solution can be enhanced, how a cease fire can be secured, the conditions prior to the peace talks, how to ensure the representation of the East Timorese in the negotiations (preliminary or during the peace talks) etc. The politicians present should play an active role in the discussion so that the conference can end with concrete results and suggestions to move ahead.

Time and date of the hearing

In the preliminary discussions in Holland involving members of the Dutch Indonesia Committee and X minus Y Movement, it was suggested that the hearing should be held before the 1990 summer recess. In practical terms April or May would be the only possibilities. This will be decided in conjunction with some key figures in the European Parliament (to ensure their presence at the hearing). By the end of January we hope to be able to decide on the date and the venue.

Finances and organisation in Brussels

External help will be needed to finance the hearing. The heaviest burden will be to pay the fares of the East Timorese participants (and other invited speakers). Other costs will be for publications, publicity and the normal conference costs. Efforts to raise funds should be a concern for all the European solidarity groups. We hope by the end of January to prepare a budget for the hearing.

The last Christian Consultation on East Timor in Brussels was hosted by Christian Movement for Peace. As one of the East Timor solidarity groups, it is expected that the CMP will also contribute in organising the hearing. The Quakers Bureau in Brussels will also participate.

If you have any comments, please send them to either the Dutch Indonesia Committee or TAPOL.

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